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RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHZP #0120 0391923
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 081923Z FEB 08
FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1720
INFO RUEHKG/AMEMBASSY KINGSTON 0258
RUEHBH/AMEMBASSY NASSAU 0090
RUEHSJ/AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE 1928
RUEHDG/AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO 0411

C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 000120

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/08/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [SMIG](#) [BF](#) [CO](#) [CS](#) [CU](#) [DR](#) [JM](#) [MX](#) [PM](#)
SUBJECT: PANAMA: URGENT MEDEVAC DEMARCHE DELIVERED

REF: STATE 13050

Classified By: POLCOUNS Brian R. Naranjo. Reason: 1.4 (d).

Panama Ponders Whether to Accept

¶1. (C) "Let me raise this request with (First VP and FM) Samuel Lewis," Lewis' Senior Advisor Adolfo Ahumada told POLCOUNS on February 8 in response to reftel request for GOP assistance. Ahumada underscored (twice) in a brief conversation the "political sensitivities" that would need to be overcome to accept any protected Cuban migrant from U.S. Naval Station, Guantanamo. Given the narrow and specific nature of this request -- to commit to facilitate the entry and treatment of one protected migrant in the event of medical necessity with the understanding that the USG would pay for all transportation and medical treatment costs as well as, upon termination of medical treatment, return the migrant to Guantanamo -- Ahumada undertook to consult with Lewis.

Comment

¶2. (C) While Ahumada, Lewis' closest advisor and confidant, was willing bring this special case to Lewis' attention, it is important not to raise expectations too high that Panama will commit to facilitate medical treatment. Panama is normally loathe to accept migrants, particularly Cuban migrants and especially Cuban migrants from Guantanamo. Should Panama agree to assist in this case, Panama is likely to underscore that it is not establishing any precedents for future migrant cases and to insist that this matter be handled without any public fanfare. In the end, post assesses that Panama is very, very unlikely to commit to offer assistance in this matter. Post will continue to follow up on this matter until a final decision is reached.
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